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ABSTRACT

Many mothers and fathers are parenting differently since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This booklet describes how parents are discovering new ways to strengthen and build upon their relationships with their children and provides advice to parents on how to help their children grow closer to them, to become caring and sharing people, to resist clever advertising, and to love their country. The booklet emphasizes that advertising coaches children to manipulate parents' feelings and that parents need to control their own feelings and teach their children about self-control, empathy, moderation, and charity. The fun of parenting is highlighted and five essential components of the parenting role are discussed: teaching skills, inculcating values, teaching self-discipline, engaging in play, and passing on a sense of "eternal purpose." The importance of teaching friendship skills is also explored. The booklet then details eight lessons in child rearing: (1) children will love their parents no matter what they do; (2) children of all ages want to be parented through structure and rules; (3) children want parents to be parents, not friends or buddies; (4) parents should realize that it is natural to nurture and raise their children and that it is rewarding; (5) children's emotional responses will mirror those of their parents; (6) if parents share their happiness and sadness with their child, their child will share their happiness and sadness with the parents; (7) parents need to share more positives with their children than negatives; and (8) parents should give gifts to their children out of love for their child and not out of guilt. Included are suggestions for "hands-on" parenting of adolescents and compelling descriptions of some fathers killed on September 11, 2001. (KB)

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Parenting after September 11, 2001.

ED 466 309

Val J. Peter

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The Girls and Boys Town Book on Successful Parenting

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PARENTING after September 11, 2001

Val J. Peter
Executive Director, Girls and Boys Town

Also from Boys Town Press

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on Successful Parenting

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Executive Director, Girls and Boys Town

BOYS TOWN PRESS

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Parenting After September 11, 2001
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National Hotline

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Introduction

A series of events have occurred in America that is changing the way moms and dads look at the responsibilities they have for their children. They all center around September 11, the day that symbolizes the end of the world as we knew it.

Before September 11, we as a nation were not focused on family. Our eyes were elsewhere: money, fashion, sports, Hollywood. Humor was cynical…nothing was sacred. But even in that age of cynicism and glamour, we were now and then shocked at how far we had strayed from what pundits called "family values." Two examples suffice.

- Some time ago, PBS's *Frontline* featured a documentary on a major outbreak of

syphilis in Conyers, Georgia, with the core group being middle-class white girls, mostly under sixteen. It's a shock to hear a 14-year-old girl say she has had thirty or forty sex partners. Cynthia Noel, a nurse at the Public Health Department, told *Frontline:* "These girls were not homeless. They were not abused in any way. They were just normal, everyday, regular kids." These were kids whose parents were not parenting them. People were shocked, but most folks went about their business as usual.

- More recently in Chappaqua, New York, the *New York Post* exposed the story of a high school senior named Jeremy whose parents were right there at a party with lots of boys and girls present. The Westchester County District Attorney explains what happened: "This nude dancer, with the assistance of some of the high school students, was inserting objects into private parts of her body, as

well as putting whipped cream on parts of her body that were then being licked by some of the students."

This story was enough to shock most parents but not enough to make any changes in their own parenting style.

Then came September 11 when the terrorist attacks radically changed our country and made countless parents pay attention and say: "How am I going to prepare my children for the days ahead?" What lies ahead? Years of terror and tragedy, courage and sacrifice?

- The torch of freedom is being passed to a new generation. And mom and dad know they need to prepare their children for whatever lies ahead.
- Family has become central to our lives again. So the question is: How do we parent after September 11?

Part of the answer is right in front of us. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia

University issued research findings for 2000 which, in the wake of September 11, are being taken to heart by more and more parents.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA Chairman and President, listed twelve possible actions which parents could take with respect to their teenagers:

1. Monitor what their teens watch on television.
2. Monitor what they do on the Internet.
3. Put restrictions on the music they buy.
4. Know where their teens are after school and on weekends.
5. Expect to be told and are told the truth by their teens about where they really are going.
6. Are "very aware" of their teen's academic performance.
7. Impose a curfew.
8. Make clear they would be "extremely upset" if their teen used marijuana.

9. Eat dinner with their teen most every night.
10. Turn off the TV during dinner.
11. Assign their teen regular chores.
12. Have an adult present when the teen returns from school.

Then, based on how many of these actions parents actually take with their teens, CASA put parents into three categories:

- "Hands-on"
- "Half-hearted"
- "Hands-off"

Teens living in "hands-on" households, for example, have parents who regularly take ten or more of the actions listed above.

The survey found:

- Nearly one in five teens (18%) lives with parents classified as "hands-off," that is, parents who do not consistently have rules and expectations. These parents take five or less of the described twelve

actions. Teens with "hands-off" parents are four times more likely to abuse substances than teens with "hands-on" parents.

- The survey found that 47% of teens living in "hands-on" households report an excellent relationship with their father. This compares to 13% of teens living in "hands-off" households.
- And a full 57% of teens in "hands-on" households report an excellent relationship with their mother. That compares to only 24% of teens living in "hands-off" households who report the same.

Mr. Califano says: "It is time for every parent to look in the mirror rather than to look outside to what someone else can do. Parents should ask themselves: 'Am I a parent to my teen, or a pal? Do I monitor what my teen watches on television or on the Internet, what music CDs he or she buys and listens to? Do I know where my teen is after school or on

weekends? Have I made it clear I would be extremely upset if my teen used marijuana? Do I know how my teen is doing in school? Have I set a curfew for my teen? Do we have dinner together as a family almost every night – without the television on?' The more CASA examines teen risk of substance abuse, the more it becomes clear that parents have enormous power for good."

After September 11, these findings have even greater urgency.

This little book intends to help you, mom and dad, come back to the art of parenting that Father Flanagan and his boys and girls have never left.

CHAPTER 1

What's Wrong?

A strange phenomenon is occurring across our land. After September 11, 2001, more and more parents are asking what they need to do to better parent their children. And more and more children are discovering the days when they controlled their parents are fast disappearing. The results are pleasurable for moms and dads and beneficial for sons and daughters.

We are going to be sharing with you eight lessons in upbringing. They go back to Father Flanagan, himself. Yes, America is returning to the values Girls and Boys Town never left behind. Before beginning our lessons, let's start with the widespread phenomenon of parents not knowing how to parent. In many cases,

it's not mom or dad's fault since they were never introduced to the art of "bringing up" children. It's more complicated than a simple lack of skills. It's the result, in many cases, of how we ourselves were raised. Let's start with some examples:

Here's a mother and father who learned from their immigrant parents who were too strict. They felt their parents raised them to be:

- too inhibited
- too guilt-ridden
- too uncreative
- too afraid to take risks
- too conventional
- too uptight

So this new mom and dad turned to the self-esteem movement for advice on how to parent. They read books on the new psychology of parenting and internalized one basic idea, namely, praise your child regularly.

- So they praise their children when they do well.
- They praise their children when they do not do well.
- They even praise their children when they are abysmal in their performance.
- One clear result is that their children are not uptight and guilt ridden like they were.

But there are other unforeseen results which mom and dad are not prepared for. Their son is now thirteen:

- He is skipping school.
- He is not following instructions at home.
- He is oppositional.
- He is defiant.
- When his parents try to discipline him, he effectively neutralizes their efforts by stating over and over again: "You don't love me. If you loved me you wouldn't do these things to me."

- They are troubled and offended by these stinging rebukes from their son.

What can these parent do, but give in and hope for the best?

As you'll see later, there is a lot these parents can do!

* * *

Then there is Amy, whose parents are divorced. Her father has custody of her. He is very mean and even beats her when he is drunk. There is no doubt about it. It is physical abuse. She runs away and comes to her mother. Mom has no custody rights because she has a cocaine problem. She gives her daughter hugs. The police come and take the daughter to a shelter. Her mother visits the shelter three days in a row and gives her a big hug each time. When she runs away, her mother gives her money to stay in a motel. Amy tells the judge she wants to go live with her mother who hugs her rather than her father who slugs her. The Girls and Boys Town counselor tells the moth-

er: "You really can't have your daughter come and live with you because you have a drug problem and you will drag her down with you." Her response is: "Amy will think I'm a bad mom if I don't do this." What's a mom to do?

* * *

Here is a mom whose live-in boyfriend commits suicide. She calls Girls and Boys Town and says: "Could I please have Joey (her 13-year-old son) come home because I need him to console me during this time?" Whose needs are being met? Who is mothering whom?

* * *

One of Girls and Boys Town's well-loved senior pediatricians comes to lunch at the Village Visitors Center quite upset one day. As a pediatrician, he has been taking care of children for so long that he is now treating the grandchildren of the first children he saw as a young doctor so many years ago.

Why is he upset? Last week a mother came in with her 2-year-old daughter. The daughter had an earache. Doc gave her drops and said: "These will take good care of it. Please do this twice a day and come back and see me in a week."

The mother came back today, and her baby daughter was much worse. The mother said: "I am sorry, doctor, little Christina won't let me put the drops in her ears." Clearly mom is not parenting Christina.

* * *

Here is a mom and dad whose daughter, Marie, age 16, is totally out of control. Mom and dad try to discipline her but it doesn't work. "I tell all of my friends I have bad parents," Marie says. Mom and dad feel guilt ridden. They finally send their daughter to Girls and Boys Town.

Here she learns the self-help and self-discipline she needs. In her senior year, she strikes

up a romantic relationship with a boy back home. Her mom and dad are very, very proud of her and her success here. So, on graduation day they present her with a brand new car and they put down six months' rent on an apartment so she can play house with her new boyfriend. They say she is "old enough to make up her own mind." Of course, Marie now declares them to be wonderful parents and not bad like they used to be. They are pleased.

These parents don't know the difference between being a parent and being a friend to their daughter.

* * *

Then there is a mother who allows the boyfriend of her 16-year-old daughter, Linda, to sleep over with her in their house. The mother isn't enthusiastic about it, but she allows it anyway because she is afraid her daughter will think her a "bad mom" if she doesn't.

* * *

Tommy's mom lets him have his tongue pierced in the seventh grade. She doesn't want to seem to be a bad mom. Lots of moms and dads succumb to their child's threats of blackmail: "I'll tell everybody you are a bad mom if you don't let me do this."

* * *

Mary, who is the seventh grade, is allowed to dress inappropriately because her mom thinks "it's cute" and she will be popular as a result. Mom is reliving her early adolescence through her daughter.

* * *

Tom and Cathy come from middle-class families. They both work and even though they know that home-cooked meals help bring a traditional sense of family, their children tell them that they would prefer to go to McDonald's. So they do…twice a week.

Who is training whom? Who is bringing up whom? These parents are missing the oppor-

tunity to provide the old-fashioned warmth they themselves experienced growing up.

* * *

A 10-year-old boy orders steak and lobster on a regular basis when the family goes out to dinner. Mom and dad can't really afford the costly meal, but don't want him to make a scene.

* * *

A young couple preparing for marriage, discuss the topic of children. The bride-to-be says: "I don't think we will have children because I don't know how to raise them." When I inquire whether her mom and dad were good at bringing her up, her response is: "Oh, no, they never raised me. I got whatever I wanted."

* * *

Then there is the 16-year-old girl, Gina, who is a sophomore and who has already been in three high schools. Gina comes from a

wealthy family. After Thanksgiving her father announces the whole family will go to their ski lodge in the Colorado Rockies for the holidays.

She says she is not going. "I want to stay home and party with my friends." When dad says she needs to go because they are a family, she responds: "If you make me go, I will ruin Christmas for you."

Dad knows she is quite capable of ruining Christmas for her family. So, he lets her have her way. This is appeasement and will only lead to bigger problems in the future.

* * *

In all of these examples of parenting, something has gone wrong. And as a result, there is frustration and discouragement with the result that these parents don't like being moms and dads. At the heart of the problem is a profound misunderstanding of the parenting role and a corresponding lack of skills.

- None of the above parents are stupid.

- None of the above parents are simply immoral.
- Each is a mother or father who was never taught parenting skills or the art of "upbringing."
- No wonder they do not experience success.
- No wonder they do not enjoy parenting.

CHAPTER 2

The Art of Parenting

Lots of things are wrong in the examples given in the previous chapter. Let's start with one simple idea. Every one of these moms or dads is relying on feelings to tell him or her what to do with their children, and that is a bad idea.

Parenting should not be based on "feelings." Parenting should be based on clear thinking and good parenting skills.

Parenting or bringing up children is a role you play…a very specific role with very specific functions:

- It starts with understanding how to raise a child to be kind and caring and responsible.

- It's not about how you feel: wanting to be loved, or applauded, or relieved of guilt, or just left alone.
- Feelings are a notoriously unreliable guide to the role of bringing up children.

Children can manipulate our feelings easily. They know how to play on parents' feelings to their advantage: "I'll scream louder and louder until you give me what I want!" They learn to do so with skill from their youngest years.

Advertising takes advantage of the fact that little kids are easily trained. It coaches kids on how to manipulate mom and dad's feelings. Where does advertising begin? With a child's feelings:

- "You'll be a dork if you don't buy a certain product."
- Have it your way.
- Obey your thirst.
- Make your own rules.

- Just do it.

So advertising:

- Encourages children to demand a product immediately.
- Admonishes kids to be dismissive of parents who aren't cool enough to appreciate that they have to have this stuff.
- Teaches them (through role modeling) to whine and holler until they get what they want.
- Hopes peers will make fun of kids who don't have this stuff.

Yes, advertising teaches your little child to be a whining, selfish, unattractive creature. Clear thinking and good parenting skills, however, can stop this and help your child become a giving, caring, sharing, attractive little child.

So, parenting should be the business of mom and dad:

- Gaining mastery over your own feelings.

- Not feeling guilty if you do not give in to your child's demands.
- Teaching them to value relationships over materialism.
- Teaching them to show empathy and respect for others.
- Teaching them to work to achieve goals.
- Teaching children self-control.

Advertising teaches kids how to nag their parents.

- It teaches them to play on mom's emotions.
- It teaches them how to whine.
- It teaches them to wheedle parents into buying them things.
- Advertising encourages children to think of "me first, now."
- Advertising tells our children they are valued for what they have.

Skillful parents can teach their children to value themselves for who they are…especially

their relationships to brothers, sisters, mom, dad, grandparents.

A skillful parent needs to teach children to learn about self-control. Empathy. Moderation. Charity.

Here's a typical example of how a child tries to manipulate mom's feelings:

- Heidi, age 2, begs mom: "I want some M&M's…I want some M&M's." Mom says: "We are going to eat dinner in a few minutes, so you have to wait."
- Heidi screams more. Mom says no. Heidi screams louder.
- Mom finally gives in.
- What does Heidi learn from mom? You can get what you want from your mom by screaming and yelling and hollering.
- If she says no, you just have to scream, yell and holler louder and she will give in.
- Heidi learned from advertising how to nag.

- She practices this over a long period of time.
- She teaches mom to base her parenting on feelings, not on clear thinking and good parenting skills.

Advertising is competing with you in bringing up your child. You want to raise a kind, loving child. Advertising wants your child to be a proud, happy consumer. It says to your child: "You really need these M&M's. Do what it takes to get them." By giving in, mom, in this case, was trying to bring some peace. Of course she got some peace, but only for a very brief time and at a price.

The price she paid was greater frustration, opposition and perhaps outright warfare down the road.

If we are honest with ourselves, many parents come to realize they are trying to buy happiness for themselves and obtain love from their very small children by giving them what they want. But it doesn't work. If you give

Heidi what she wants, Heidi wants more and more. So the price keeps going up. And this makes us unhappy. After September 11, parents must be more willing to go head-to-head with advertisers for the sake of our little children.

Along comes adolescence and the advertisers and TV are now raising our children on a diet of sex and violence. When adolescence arrives, it is too late to try to buy happiness for ourselves and seek love from our children. Before September 11, the sitcoms advised us to just buy a little peace and quiet. In our heart of hearts, at this point we knew it was only appeasement. We realize now that the parenting role is not something we have exercised very well all these years. But sometimes we don't understand why. In this time of terrorism, most parents really would like to know how to be effective parents.

So let us look at eight lessons in clear thinking and good parenting. This is the way

America can return to the joys of parenting that Girls and Boys Town never left behind.

LESSON #1

The first lesson about your parenting role is this: *Children will love you no matter what you* do.

Little Heidi will love you no matter what you do. She will pout and complain. She will try to get what she wants. But she will love you. You need to know that up front.

- I have worked for years with little children who come from backgrounds of terrible abuse and neglect of all kinds.
- You know what? Even these children love their moms.
- They just wish they would act like moms.
- I have seen so many little girls abused by their dads.
- You know what?

- Even these children love their dads despite it all.
- They just wish he would act like a dad and quit doing these things.
- Little children want to love their parents.
- You may think they don't, but that is an adult view. That is not the way little children think.
- So you don't have to fear that your little child won't love you.
- We forget this lesson at our own peril.

LESSON #2

The second lesson is this: *Children of all ages want to be parented. They want structure. They want rules.*

Girls and Boys Town has listened to what kids are saying for more than 80 years. They are saying they want to be parented. They don't say it every minute of every day. But over eight decades, our kids say important things in

moments of reflection and moments of wisdom. My children say:

- "I wish my parents had made the rules stick."
- "I wish my parents had not let me have my way."
- "I wish my parents had stopped me from doing drugs."

The boys and girls are telling us something very important.

- Many of them know their parents have not parented them.
- Many know their parents have acted like peers or buddies or friends, but not as parents.

If you think you are giving your kids love by always giving into them, you need to listen to our children here at Girls and Boys Town. Children need someone to parent them.

They will say they wish they had parents

who made more rules...they wish they had parents who would not let them have their way all the time...they wish they had parents who had stopped them from engaging in inappropriate sexual activity or drugs or alcohol.

What they are saying is that there is a particular way of loving that is part of being a parent. It involves providing structure and sticking to the rules.

In moments of whining and wheedling kids may say when they want something: "You are a bad mom...you are a bad dad...you don't love me because you won't give me what I want." Every parent has had their child say "I hate you" at some time. It goes with parenting.

But, mom and dad, you have to remember that in times of anger, your kids say these things to manipulate you. That's when you need to stick to your guns. Not give up and surrender.

When the going gets tough, tough (caring)

parents get going. And their kids get better.

LESSON #3

The third lesson is: *Children want parents to be parents, not friends or buddies.* The proper role of a parent is "upbringing." Bringing up a child is a special function.

There are stages of parenting:

- Parenting starts with the nurturing relationship during the dependency of childhood.
- It continues with the caring relationship as children grow into the independence of adolescence.
- But no stage involves being a buddy or friend.

If you have a garden, you know you need to prepare the soil in the spring, plant the seed, get rid of the endless weeds, trim and prune if necessary, watch out for and know how to get rid of beetles and the blight, as well as watering,

cultivating and harvesting. If you grow a garden, you aren't reactive as much as proactive.

The same is true in raising children. A parent has to remember that it is his or her job to *bring children up* to be loving, caring, sharing, helpful, and happy people.

- The proper role of the parent, then, is to have the parent/child relationship based on upbringing.
- It's not a peer relationship. Building a peer relationship does not help a child learn the necessary skills or internalize important values or develop self-discipline. The peer relationship is more about simply having fun doing things together without teaching and without guidance. Peers hang out together. Parents bring kids up.
- Neither is the parenting relationship one of *just liking each other.* If your child has to like you all of the time, you can't possibly be a parent. If you have to like your

child all the time, you can't possibly have fun as a mom or dad in the parental role.

- Neither is the relationship built on *friendship*. Although friendship is important, you are not just your child's friend. If you want always to be your child's friend, then you can't be his or her parent. Why? Because there will be times when you will have to act in a way that your child will perceive as not friendly at all. At times, a good parent says: "I will not give in to what my child wants to do. I will not give in to whim and fancy. I will not look the other way when you do very bad things. I will not act as your pal." Dad, this is not a relationship between Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Mom, this is not a relationship between two sisters.
- It is not a brother/sister relationship. Mom is not your sister. Dad is not your buddy.
- It is a parent/child relationship.

Sometimes an adolescent thinks that the parent/child relationship is a put-down. Of course it is not. A parent has to put up with more than they put down.

What are a child's wants and needs all about?

- I want to feel I can count on my parents.
- I want to feel they will be there for me.
- I want to feel I can predict their behavior.
- I need to learn discipline from them even if I object.
- I want consistency, clarity, and tough love.
- I want them to help each other and love each other.
- I am deeply attached to their relationship to each other.
- Divorce would be horrible for me because it would destroy that relationship they have with each other.

Parental behavior based on fear of being rejected or berated by your child is simple appeasement. It confuses roles and relationships. It works like this:

- I give into my kids…I give into their entreaties.
- I give them what they want and they rejoice…momentarily.
- Do my gifts do any real good?
- Yes, in the short run they buy a little temporary peace.
- In the long run, no, they don't do any good.
- The time of peace I buy gets shorter and shorter.
- Kids are not evil. They are opportunistic.
- They know how to get what they want from a parent who is filled with fear of being rejected by a child.
- They know how to get what they want from a parent who is tired of the relent-

less hassle that accompanies saying no.

What is the price of saying no? And how does it work?

Dr. Pat Friman, Clinical Psychologist at the University of Nevada at Reno, and Senior Fellow at the Boys Town Institute, uses the analogy of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' five stages of dying to describe the process of moving a child from oppositional defiance to compliance. Listen to the language kids use toward their parents when they do not get their own way:

Stage One: Denial

Mom has said no and is sticking to her guns. Little Joey says: "I can't believe it. This isn't really happening. I must be dreaming. It must be a nightmare. Mom really can't be saying no and sticking to her guns."

Stage Two: Anger

Mom continues to refuse to give in and Joey says: "I know it really is happening and

now I am really angry. I'll show her. Mom, I don't love you anymore. I never did. You aren't my real mother. If you were, you would not be doing this to me."

Stage Three: Bargaining

Mom continues to stick to her guns. Joey is saying: "Mom, I've seen the error of my ways. I will be good from this day forward. Just let me do what I want immediately. Can I get down from the chair, now, mom? You know how good I will be." When dad arrives, Joey pleads: "Daddy, you are my only hope. I love you so much. I want to hug you. Can I please get down from this chair?"

Stage Four: Depression

Mom and dad are still hanging in. Joey begins to say: "Not getting my way is worse than not existing at all…I might as well be dead…I feel awful…nothing is happening…I am depressed…I feel like an orphan…I am abandoned and neglected."

Stage Five: Acceptance

Mom and dad don't give in. Joey finally says: "I accept that you are in charge…I regret saying those things…I am ready to follow instructions."

At that very moment, mom must now give Joey a series of instructions to have her son put this newfound attitude into practice. If Joey follows those instructions, mom should give him a hug. If he doesn't, we are back to stage one.

This is what is called bringing up a child. This is what you call parenting or upbringing. You are bringing up your child to be an honest, upright, faithful, and playful young man or young woman.

The bottom line is this. Moms and dads, take courage. Stick to your guns and bring your children up. A dad said he used this method successfully with his daughter. But he said: "Because of this I have lost some of her trust."

My response was: "You have only lost inappropriate trust. If she trusts you less to get anything she wants, that is a step in the right direction."

LESSON #4

The fourth lesson is: *Follow your nature. You're a mom. You're a dad. It is natural for you to nurture and raise your children. It is rewarding. It will make you feel good.*

- If you view it as a duty or a burden, you will not give the positive side of parenting a chance.
- It is rewarding to nurture and raise your adolescent children as well. It will make you feel good.
- If your child approaches 12 or 13 and you say: "We are coming into the horrible years of adolescence," what you are really doing is conjuring up dread.

- Talking to other parents about how "bad" your kids are in their adolescent years is also conjuring up dread.

Yes, children change as they go into their teen years. But all we parents have to do is to adjust our parenting style so that it is age-appropriate for our adolescent. We'll see this in a further chapter.

CHAPTER 3

The Fun of Parenting

Sometimes kids get a very bad rap. Why? Because there are people who only think of the tough, unrewarding side of bringing up children. They neglect the great joys that a parent can have. Let's look at those joys starting first with our little children:

- It's fun to watch children share.
- It's fun to listen to the language children use when they play house in an affirming manner.
- It's fun to watch them be active and learn games such as jumping rope.
- It's fun to read stories to them.
- It's fun to sit down at the table and share ice cream and cake and not just serve it to them.

- It's fun to ask them questions like why they think rain comes down instead of going up, or why the sun comes up in the east instead of the west.
- It's fun especially to share nature with them.
- It's fun to collect leaves.
- It's fun to plant a garden and weed it and till it and watch it grow together.
- It's fun to share with them what you like, such as baking cookies and making pies.
- It's fun to do Thanksgiving things and Christmas things and Lenten things and Easter things and 4th of July things.
- It's fun to raise a little child.

Even when you have to say no to your child's unreasonable demands and stick to it, there can be a great deal of satisfaction involved for you. Why? Because you are bringing your child up to be a caring, sharing

person: Someone with a great smile and with great hope and friendship skills.

- So when you say "No," don't take personally your child's insistence that this can't be happening.
- Don't take personally that "I hate you" and "I like daddy a lot better than you" and "I'll never love you again."
- You need to rejoice when you are successful with sticking to your "No" and you need to reward yourself because you are bringing your child up right and that is a joy in itself.
- When you go to bed at night, you have to say: "Thank you, Lord, that I stuck to my guns and did not give in. I am raising our child to be a friend and a husband or wife or mom or dad, and happy."

Parenting adolescent children also brings its own joy:

- Watching your daughter and her friends do all kinds of silly-gilly things.
- Watching your son or daughter develop as an athlete.
- Watching your son or daughter develop boy/girl friendship skills of sharing, politeness, and having fun.
- Taking your son hunting is a lot of fun.
- Taking your daughter shopping is a lot of fun.
- Helping your child learn dating skills.
- Helping your child deal with success and failure.

"If you can dream
And not make dreams your master
If you can think
And not make thoughts your aim
If you can meet
With triumph and disaster
And treat these two imposters
Just the same."

– RUDYARD KIPLING, *If*

The difficult times of adolescence occur mainly through the ignorance or stubbornness of your children who are playing with dynamite and don't realize it.

- Saying no and making it stick in adolescence is difficult because on one hand you can't be too strict, and on the other hand, you can't be too loosey-goosey.
- Your adolescent children will learn quickly from MTV, rap music and games that it is "cool" to flip the bird to parents. You cannot tolerate this, even though you know it is going to happen.
- When you stick to your guns, rejoice and congratulate yourself. Get down on your knees and thank God for the strength to help your son or daughter to be brought up properly.
- Girls and Boys Town's *Common Sense Parenting*® gives a solid list of behavioral rules and appropriate consequences to put into practice in your family.

- It's a great achievement. You will feel very good inside yourself.

LESSON #5

The fifth lesson: *If you are bored with life, your child will be bored with life. If you are bored with your child, your child will be bored with you. If you are excited about life, your child will get excited about life.*

- You can get your child excited about something by getting excited about it yourself.
- If you act excited about fishing, your child will probably act excited about fishing.
- If you act excited about reading, your child will start to act excited about reading.
- If you act excited about baseball, your child will probably imitate you and want to be excited about baseball.

Share your excitement with your child.

LESSON #6

The sixth lesson: *If you share your happiness and sadness with your child, they will share their happiness and sadness with you.*

- There is a sadness when your friends and family get transferred to another town. Share that with your child.
- There is happiness in loving your spouse and having a good time together. Share that with your child.
- There is sadness over the loss of your mom and dad. Share that with your child.
- There is happiness over the successes of your brothers and sisters. Share that with your child.
- There is happiness looking at your Christmas tree. Share that with your child.
- There is sadness in taking it down. Share that with your child.

LESSON #7

The seventh lesson: *When raising children, it is good to recall the old tune "There's No Business Like Show Business." You need to "smile when you are low."*

- This may sound like a contradiction to what was said above, but it really isn't.
- You need to share more joys than sorrows if you want your child to grow up with a smile.
- If you go around acting like a victim, you will teach your child someday to do the same.
- It is good to say: "Yes, son and daughter, we have troubles, but we know how to deal with them."
- "Look for the silver lining when a cloud appears in the blue."
- "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile."

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CHAPTER 4

The Parenting Role

The parenting role can be divided into five basic components. Each one of these components comes in many shades and many colors, but these five are essential to the role:

- Teaching skills
- Inculcating values
- Teaching self-discipline
- Engaging in play
- Passing on a sense of "eternal purpose"

Teaching Skills

The parenting role is a teaching role. This is most clearly seen when we first become a parent. A mom teaches a baby all kinds of skills. The fun skills are laughing, playing, hav-

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ing fun, and speaking. The tougher skills are walking, potty training, and sharing.

The imparting of skills grows as a child develops. Let's take TV as an example. As our children begin to watch TV there are two skills that we need to impart quite quickly:

- The skill of delaying gratification as opposed to what the ads say, namely, demand a product and get it immediately.
- Showing empathy and respect for others instead of what advertising does, namely, mocking those who don't have the right toys or the right clothes or who look funny.

We also pass on to our children skills which we don't intend to pass on to them and which we don't even know we are passing on to them:

- how to make a cake
- how to make a fuss
- how to throw a ball

- how to throw a fit
- how to laugh
- how to cry
- how to "hold 'em"
- how to "fold 'em"

Inculcating Values

The second component of parenting is inculcating values. Let's continue with an advertising example. Advertisers are also trying to raise our children instead of us doing the job. They want our children to embrace the values of "have it your way" ... "obey your thirst" ... "make your own rules" ... "just do it." These are the values of consumption.

We want our children to value themselves for who they are and not what they have. We want our children to value their friends for who they are and not what they have. We want our children to value our family for who we are and not what we have.

- Children do what you do (by and large)...not what you say.
- When learning moral values, your child is more likely to embrace your moral values if you have a good relationship with him or her.
- So work on your relationship and then make your values clear.
- Teach your children to put balance into their lives...just as you role model this balance in your life.
- Then your teaching will be from real life experiences that can be shared.

We want our children to be brought up to be honest, decent, caring people. We want them to be filled with faith, hope, and love. We want them to appreciate and follow the Ten Commandments. We want them to be filled with compassion and also courage. None of these values are instincts. All of them must be passed on through a process of teaching. The more a mom and dad see their roles as teaching

or inculcating values, the easier it is to correct our children when they lie, cheat, or steal.

Moms and dads who practice "upbringing" skills greatly reduce the risk of their children misusing drugs, alcohol, and sex. Upbringing is the most underutilized tool in drug prevention. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse's research shows that parents of seven out of ten adolescents set few if any rules. Not surprisingly, these seven kids are four times more likely to get into serious drug problems.

If I want my son to be an honest person, and he has just taken something from the store that does not belong to him, I have a marvelous opportunity to teach without being overly punitive. It's a great time to go back to the store with my son and explain to the manager that the boy has taken this candy bar without paying for it. It is important that my son feel guilty when he lies, cheats, or steals. That is appropriate guilt. It is healthy and maturing. This is the beginning of conscience formation in our

little son or daughter. It is quite critical. Without it, our children will grow up without a moral conscience.

For example, parents who lie, cheat, or steal quickly pass these negative practices on to their children. The other day here at Girls and Boys Town, a 14-year-old boy gave me this explanation for his shoplifting the day before at K-Mart: "My dad says stores make a 10% allowance for shoplifting so we just want to get our share."

Above all, we want our children to value relationships over materialism. Advertising stresses "me first now." You and I can teach our children just the opposite.

Here are three values to teach our children so they value relationships over materialism: empathy, moderation, and charity.

- **Empathy.** Empathy is just the opposite of making fun of kids who don't have the right jeans or the right shoes or who live on the wrong side of the tracks. Empathy is not a matter of making fun. It's just the

opposite. It's a matter of helping, sharing and caring.

How do you develop empathy? Let me tell you a story. Tony, age 15, is one of our boys. He comes from a very wealthy family in New England. He learned all the values of consumerism from his mother, who had money for him, but never any time. He began to believe that a person's importance is based on what he has, and he had a lot...just about everything that MTV told him he had to have "to be cool." The many difficulties in his life brought him to us. On Christmas evening I happened to be present when he called his mother to complain. I found out later that he had sent her a list of Christmas gifts that she "needed to buy" for him, valuing about $2,600. The phone call was to let her know he did not appreciate receiving only $600 worth of items from that list. Remember, this is Christmas night, a time when you should feel grateful, peaceful, hopeful and happy. He was ungrateful, angry, envious and unhappy.

One of the best ways we know at Girls and Boys Town to help a lad like this is to teach him the value of empathy. He really doesn't care about anybody else other than himself.

A key insight hit me the day he told me that as a little boy he loved the puppy they had. And his father, in a fit of anger, took the puppy away and never brought it back. It was perhaps the last time Tony ever cared for anyone or anything except himself.

We tried three strategies to teach Tony empathy. In other words, we set up occasions for learning to occur.

The first was assigning him a job at our small animal farm. He became attached to our bucket calves (those that need to be fed by a bottle with a nipple, morning and night). But what he really attached himself to was the barnyard cats...there are four of them and they are "in charge" of the barns. They walk around like foremen. But what really touched him was the stray cats. Yes, people dump their throw-

away kitties at our barn, expecting us, of course, to care for them. Caring for the cats helped Tony a lot.

Another strategy was to spend more time with Tony doing things together. Tony claimed at first he didn't care. But he did!

A final strategy was to ask Tony to be a mentor to a 4th grader in his house who came to us not knowing how to read. The little boy quickly attached himself to Tony. Tony rejected the friendship for quite a while. But then they became good friends.

Tony is now much more empathetic than he used to be. Praise the Lord for that.

- **Moderation.** Moderation means not too much and not too little.

Advertising tells us that we really need to be one of the first people in class to have the newest style or the most up-to-date game, or the most expensive shoes.

Advertising tells us that we should "super-size" just about everything, even if we can't

possibly use it. We should super-size at McDonald's to the point where we couldn't possibly eat everything.

Moderation means just the opposite. It means being satisfied with what we have. Not to be satisfied with what we have oftentimes makes children look like spoiled brats.

It is the value of moderation that makes us feel good when we can say, "No, I won't take more than my fair share." Or, "I won't eat to the point of bursting at the seams."

Usually a few days after Christmas we have a big pizza party for our kids at Sortino's, one of the best pizza places in the Midwest. A very generous benefactor pays for this marvelous holiday outing. Everyone is in the Christmas spirit. We get all dressed up. And with regard to moderation, there is a curious phenomenon that takes place. A boy will go up to the counter and if not instructed to stop, will take an extra-large pizza and go over in a corner all by himself, not sharing it with any-

one…letting half of it grow cold…it's plain old hoarding. I always go up to the lad and say: "Mikey, you need to give me that pan of pizza and come over and join the other kids. Here at Girls and Boys Town we take only one piece of pizza at a time. We eat the crust and we learn to share so that every boy and girl gets hot pizza and there's enough to go around." First you get a grumble or two, but by the end of the night, Mike comes up and says: "Thanks, Father, I had a great time." Lesson learned.

Remember how inspiring it is to see a little 2-year-old break his or her doughnut in half and share it with a friend. That's what we're trying to teach. Advertising's message is just the opposite: "Me," "Mine," "Now."

- **Charity.** If we can teach our children the value of charity or generosity, it will be so, so very helpful in the lives of our children. They will be much happier. They will be more loved. And they will bring goodness into the world.

Charity or generosity is one of the first indicators of a happy person. The message we would like our kids to take to heart is: Giving is better than receiving.

Many years ago, I was assigned to a parish with a priest who is one of the most spontaneously generous people I have ever met in my life. He gives with a smile. He gives and does not count the cost. He does not do so for selfish purposes. He gives because giving is better than receiving. He doesn't give after reflection. He just gives spontaneously. I learned spontaneous giving from him.

Teaching Self-Discipline

Helping your child learn self-discipline is the third component of our parenting role. As America becomes a target of terrorism, the need for self-discipline grows enormously.

No parent simply wants his or her child to grow up and follow whatever Hollywood says. Every parent knows that the direction the media takes is often the direction of whim and

fancy. These are not good guides for our children or for adults.

That is why helping your child learn self-discipline is an important task. Sometimes people think that inculcating self-discipline is always negative. Of course it's not.

It is true that self-discipline means not lying, not cheating, not stealing. It means developing self-restraint in all of these areas.

But if you lived with us here at Girls and Boys Town, you would discover quite quickly that there is a huge, huge area of self-discipline that is positive, not negative. Our children come here crippled by fear, anxiety, disappointment, abandonment, abuse, and neglect.

For us, self-discipline requires that we make sacrifices enough to move beyond these negative influences of our lives. That means self-discipline requires that a child learn:

- To discipline oneself against fear (of abandonment or abuse or neglect or

mental illness) so you are not controlled by it.

- To discipline oneself against terror (chemical or biological elements like anthrax or bubonic plague) so it does not paralyze you.
- To discipline oneself against disappointment (my dad promised he would call for my birthday and he never did) so it does not destroy you.
- To discipline oneself against an over-burdening sense of duty (my mom is sick and I, a 14-year-old, need to go home and take charge of the house).
- There are times when it takes self-discipline to give yourself permission to throw caution to the wind and to play sports with great vigor. This is a time to be fully passionate.
- A boy or girl without self-discipline is not likeable. They have a hard time making friends. They are selfish. They are

petulant. They are a nuisance. They are a pain. And therefore, they are hard to love.

In other words, self-discipline means impulse control:

- Learning how to respond to terror in a constructive fashion.
- Discovering what the triggers for cynicism or despondency are in our lives and learning how to channel them appropriately.
- Anger management is so important. Advertising says: Get angry if you don't get what you want *immediately.* Yet delaying gratification is the pause that refreshes us into human kindness and warmth.

Engaging in Play

The fourth component of the parenting role is play. Playing with our children is one of the most fun things we can do.

- Mom plays peek-a-boo with her baby. They both smile, laugh and have fun.
- Dad and his 4-year-old son play hide and seek.
- Mom and her 6-year-old daughter tell fanciful stories about how the family puppy is carrying on conversations with them and how the birds outside are playing tag and having meetings and planning vacations.
- Dad teaches his 8-year-old son how to fish and his 7-year-old daughter, too.
- Mom teaches her 11-year-old daughter how to cook and her 12-year-old son, too.

All of this is play. All of it is fun. And it is part of the parenting role. One of the things I like most about Girls and Boys Town is all of the fun we have together.

- The picnics
- The roller-skating

- The football and basketball games
- The volleyball and soccer games
- The Christmas play
- The Tuesday high school caucus
- The daily opening exercise at our middle school
- The walks around the lake
- The geese in the fall
- The sleigh riding in the winter
- The Easter egg hunt in the spring
- The 4th of July fireworks in the summer

If you don't think bringing kids up is fun, you have really missed something.

So when your son or daughter turns 11 or 12, don't listen to the people who tell you: "Oh, the horrible years are coming now. You will hate every minute of it." That can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. But it doesn't have to be. It can be a time of great fun.

A Sense of Eternal Purpose

The fifth component of our parenting role is passing on a sense of "eternal purpose." We all come from the hand of God. We are made for a purpose. We are on a mission...each of us.

No one is a random isolate. Passing this sense of the "eternal purpose" on to our children is something our children most frequently cite as a precious gift when we have gone home.

So pass on to your children that sense of purpose so important in living.

Every one of those moms and dads who died in the New York and Washington and Pennsylvania tragedies was put on this earth for a purpose:

- Each had a song to sing and if it was not sung, the world is the lesser for it.
- Each had a message to deliver and if they did not deliver it, something important was lost.
- Each had a love to bring and without it

the world is less loving.

The same is true of their children. It is also true of you and me. So let's get going on our "mission."

Summary

There is a wonderful family I know living out in the Nebraska Sandhills. Their nearest neighbor is about 20 miles away.

The mom told me the story of her 16-year-old-daughter who, in a rebellious mood one day, said: "Who do you think you are that you can tell me what to do?" The mother, who truly understands her parenting role replied: "I will tell you who I am. The Lord made me a woman. He made me a wife and a mother. He gave me you as a daughter. He told me my mission was to bring you up as best I could and to inculcate the values of the Ten Commandments. I need to carry out that mission. The Lord gave me this job to raise you properly. I plan to do the Will of the Lord. Do you understand this?"

On the following Mother's Day, the daughter thanked her mom for "helping me understand by being such a good mom." Case closed.

Oftentimes, a daughter or a son won't be so quick to thank you. But it is only a matter of time…even if it takes ten, twenty or thirty years…but it won't take that long…your son or daughter will thank you for parenting.

So, in summary, the parenting role has to avoid two extremes. The one extreme is to think of yourself simply as a drill instructor or disciplinarian. This is to be avoided. The other extreme is to think of yourself as someone who just loves your son or daughter. That, too, is to be avoided. We can't bring our children up successfully by embracing either of these two extremes.

CHAPTER 5

Friendship Skills

Above all, teach your children friendship skills. After all, friendship is the basis for all successful marriages and family life. Because of that, friendship skills should be a major focus of teaching our children as they grow up:

As very little children, the first set of friendship skills they need to help them develop are learning how to play with each other:

- Saying "Hi."
- Saying "Welcome."
- Saying "Would you like to play with my toys?"
- Sharing games.
- Riding the merry-go-round together.
- Being on swings.

- Going down the slippery slide.
- Listening to stories.
- Picking up toys together.
- Having fun.

Let's look at some negative behaviors of little children…behaviors not helpful to friendship…which we have to help our children "unlearn":

- Grabbing a toy from your friends.
- Refusing to play with your friend.
- Saying bad things to your friend.
- Not sharing.
- Seeking too much attention.
- Crying when you don't get your way.
- Pouting to show anger.
- Throwing temper tantrums.
- Hitting.

These negative behaviors are hard to unlearn. Wouldn't it be better for parents to get

ahead of the game early on by teaching positive skills?

Parents have to shift gears as children grow into adolescence. If we are to bring our adolescents up right, we need to teach them certain specific skills.

Conversation skills:

- This is an especially fun time when you can teach your son or daughter how to talk to kids of the opposite sex.
- Talk about schoolwork.
- Sports.
- Current events.
- Movies.
- Fun things.

Relationship skills:

- Showing how a boy and girl can become friends.
- Teach your child how to dance. Most parents don't do this anymore. But it's

really important and really fun. You may have to learn new dancing yourself. But teach it.

- Teach your adolescent to get involved in extra-curricular activities with both boys and girls. It's a way for your child to discover their talents and develop their skills.
- Teach them to remember as little children how they shared and they can share now, too.
- Teach them courting skills – polite language and polite behavior.

There are also negative skills your children will learn from others and you have to help them avoid these:

- Intimidating language
- Sexual harassment
- Being pushy
- Being a bully
- Girls experiencing the power they have over boys and manipulating this

- Boys and girls only being friends with "good looking" members of the opposite sex
- Playing one person off against the other
- Becoming a jealous or possessive young woman
- Boys saying lewd things to girls (they learn it from CDs)
- Imitating soap operas
- Or even imitating pornographic films

If you have been teaching your son or daughter all along, it is not a tough transition to do this in adolescence.

Pre-teach your adolescents in advance with clear, positive and negative consequences and never, never announce consequences that you cannot carry out.

- Teach your children to express their feelings appropriately, not just to you, but to their friends.
- Teach your adolescent that friendship means sharing and caring, but it does not

mean you possess the other person and it does not mean that your friend's body is an amusement park. They are a temple of the Holy Spirit just as you are.

We also need to teach our children the kinds of language which adolescents should avoid if they are to build genuine friendships:

- Player language *(yo baby, you know you want it)*
- Ho language *(I got what you want)*
- Possessive language *(my woman...my man)*
- The language of rap
- The language of sexual harassment
- The language of domination, subjugation, subordination
- The language of exclusion

Teach your adolescent to be slightly counter-cultural – that's right, teach them to say no to at least some of the things which their

friends want to do or the music tells them to do or "everybody does."

- To be slightly counter-cultural means that you are the kind of friend that won't misuse others.
- You are the kind of friend who will not lead others into harm's way.
- You are the kind of friend who tells your pals what they need to hear and not what they want to hear.
- You are the kind of friend who won't say lewd things to act cool.
- You are the kind of friend who won't shoplift to act cool.

Teach your adolescents that if they are not to be overpowered by drugs, sex, and alcohol, that they need to have a personal relationship with the Lord, whose power is far greater than the power arrayed against them. This includes the power of advertising which is clearly not on their side. In a personal relationship with the

Lord, there are friendship skills that help your son and daughter realize that their value does not depend on what they have, but on who they are...their relationships.

The wider range of interests your son or daughter can develop helps build friendships.

- The reason so many kids get into drugs, sex and alcohol is because they have few interests.
- Their lives are boring.
- They haven't learned anything in school.
- They haven't gotten excited about their world.

Conclusion

Prophecies about raising adolescent children are self-fulfilling. If you tell yourself it is going to be gosh-awful and start believing it, it will come true. It will be gosh-awful. You will be miserable and so will your children.

If you tell yourself it will be fun and interesting, and yet different from childhood, that will come true provided you bring your adolescents up and not let others do so for you.

CHAPTER 6

Giving Gifts or Buying Love

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates about 60% of mothers today are working and their children are in day care.

This is a relatively new way to parent in America. It has both pluses and minuses. Traditionally, moms have stayed home to raise their children. Large numbers of them have regularly reported a high level of satisfaction in doing so.

But now so many have moved into the workplace. And there are lots of reasons for having done so. One is the simple straightforward reason that they have talents which they would like to share with others in the workplace. Another is that their husbands have

walked out on them and have abandoned the family financially and every other way.

It is a happy event to note that many mothers can handle the job of a working mom very well.

LESSON #8

The last lesson is: *Give gifts to your children out of a straightforward love for your child and not out of guilt.*

The kind of gift giving that is based on guilt is easy to spot.

- Dad gets drunk…he beats his son…and then the next day he buys his son a gift. This father/son relationship has been harmed and there is no repair of the relationship by this kind of gift giving.
- A boy forces sex on his girlfriend and the next day he buys her a gift. The relationship between this boy and his girlfriend has been horribly harmed and a gift is no repair of the relationship.

There is another kind of gift giving out of guilt that affects especially working moms. Working moms often feel guilty for spending time away from their child. Ask any day care worker about that. They will be happy to give you many examples.

Sometimes moms give into their guilty feelings and ply their day-care children with gifts. Let's see how this works in a child's mind:

- Mom comes to day care and gives her child a gift.
- The child says: "Mom shows up always giving me stuff."
- "Thanks, mom, it shows you love me and I really want you to bring me more stuff tomorrow when you come for me."
- And sure enough, mom comes and brings "more stuff."

Watch what is happening here:

- These rewards are not rewards contingent on behavior.

- They are not based on the parenting role of teaching skills or inculcating values.
- They are operant acts on mom's part to reduce her own anxiety.
- Of course, they increase her anxiety instead.

Let's take the example of business trips. Lots of working moms have to travel. So do dads. They bring gifts in compensation. It's equivalent to saying: "There was a debt incurred because I was away doing my job and not being here as a mom or dad should be for you."

Here again, the child says: "Dad is showing up after a trip dying to give me stuff. I think I'll ask for more stuff whenever he goes on a trip." These rewards are not contingent upon the child's behavior. The traveler is trying to reduce his own anxiety. The result, of course, is that the anxiety is increased and not reduced. And that makes a child to be a spoiled

brat…always demanding "more, more, more."

There are two categories of gift giving when coming back from a trip. We have just described one of them. It is gift giving out of guilt.

There is another kind of gift giving when coming back from a trip. It's "mysterious." Because mom or dad went to a "far away place."

Here the idea is not give me, give me, give me, give me. The idea is: "Your mom traveled to an exotic or unknown place (for example, Cedar Rapids, Iowa). She wanted to share a bit of that exotic place with you. So she brought home something that actually had been in that exotic place. Maybe it's just a postcard from the motel room. Note here, it doesn't have to be expensive. You don't even have to purchase it. It could be something free.

The idea is to make traveling part of a world of fantasy and adventure. The motive is for mom and child to share an adventure and to

have fun together. This does not take away guilt. It simply increases the child's supply of fun.

Here at Girls and Boys Town's elementary school, we provide small, inexpensive prizes for good work in reading and spelling and even for not being sent to the office.

Where do these prizes come from? All my kids know the answer:

- Father Peter has a good Chinese friend, whose name is Charlie Chan.
- Charlie is a merchant trader who lives in Katmandu, Nepal.
- Charlie travels to Kuala Lampur on a regular basis to do business with Father Peter.
- They always meet on the corner of the Streets of the Seven Happinesses and the Flaming Dragon.
- This is where they strike many deals.
- This is where the riches (trinkets) of the Orient pour out.

- And come all the way back to our little elementary school.
- We even have a Katmandu newspaper which from time to time prints articles about these negotiations going on in Kuala Lampur.
- Such a mystic approach is referred to as "the willing suspension of disbelief."
- Our kids don't call it that.
- They call it fun.

It's always fun to bring a smile to our children's faces. But let's not get rid of our anxiety by buying them gifts. If we do, they will simply demand more. And we will discover our anxiety did not go away, but only increased.

Grandparents or, for example, a favorite aunt, don't occupy the role of a parent. They can always bring candy and the kids love it. Their role is different. They are not parents. Their job is not to bring the kids up.

Many of us today learned the love and candy approach from our own moms and dads. We have a confused role of parenting:

- We think parenting means having the kids always love us.
- We think parenting means to relive our childhood.
- We think parenting means showing off our kids to the neighbors.
- We think parenting means your children can always stay at home no matter how much they violate the rules with drugs, sex, alcohol, truancy, and stealing.
- We think that parenting means I will always stand by my children and even lie to the school principal or to the police to get them off the hook.

These things are not parenting. What do our children learn from parents who act as love buyers?

- They learn it's okay to ruin their parents' lives.

- They learn it's okay to be selfish, over-demanding and self-indulgent.
- They learn to be brats.
- They help their parents learn to hate the role of parenting.

Do you ever feel trapped like this?

- You don't know what to do.
- You are fearful the kids won't like you.
- First you start giving in.
- Then you start gift giving.
- This is gift giving out of fear of being bad parents.
- Giving in out of fear of not being loved.
- Giving in out of fear that your children will be unhappy.
- This is unfortunately neurotic behavior: Engaging in behavior out of fear and the behavior increases the fear.
- We need to avoid this emotional parenting trap.

Please notice that these parents are not engaging in behaviors meant to destroy the family.

- They are not drunks.
- They are not drug addicts.
- They are not physically, sexually, or emotionally abusing their children.
- They are love buyers.
- They are parents who don't understand the role of parenting.
- Consequently, they do not engage in the parenting role.
- Consequently, they do not like being parents.

Yet none of this has to be. We can learn parenting skills ourselves. We can learn the art of gift giving. We can find joy in being moms and dads.

A Tribute to Mothers

I had the meanest mother in the world. While other children could skip breakfast, I had to have cereal and toast. While others had Cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my supper was different from other children's, also. My mother insisted on knowing where we kids were all the time. You would think we were on a chain gang. She even had to know who our friends were and what we were doing.

She insisted on our following her rules. She kept saying it was "her house." What a dictator! Oh yes, I know she praised us a lot, but who cares about praise from someone who thinks she is the "boss of everything?" Can you imagine, she even had to approve what clothes

we wore? So we always looked old-fashioned. She would not even let us go to the drive-in movies. How could she be so mean?

My mother actually had the nerve to break the Child Labor Law. She made us work. We had to make beds, wash dishes, learn to cook, and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she lay awake at night just thinking of mean things to do to us. She always insisted upon our telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even if it took us hours and hours to do so – and it often did. She embarrassed us by insisting that she personally meet our dates. How humiliating.

She insisted on taking us to church every Sunday without exception. She did not care how late we were out at night. We got up with her and went to church. As you can see, my mother was a complete failure. Because she was so mean, none of us kids have ever done drugs or been arrested or been involved in violence. Some of us did our time in service to our country. All of us do community service. And

whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother. She forced us to grow up into kind, sharing, thinking, honest adults.

Using this as a pattern, I am trying to rear my own children here at Girls and Boys Town. I stand a little taller and am filled with pride when my children call me "mean."

CHAPTER 8

These Fallen Fathers Were At-Home Heroes

BY JANE GROSS

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Jeannine McIntyre's husband, Donald, a Port Authority police officer, planned to join the Parent-Teacher Association in New City, N.Y., even if he was the only man. He often surprised his 5-year-old daughter with "hair pretties," as she called barrettes. He had saved enough overtime for a month-long paternity leave when his third child was born in December.

Dr. Nichole Brathwaite-Dingle's husband, Jeffrey, a high-tech executive, was a stay-at-home father during her medical residency, in charge of bedtime and bath time, school bus

schedules and spelling words. He planned to take his 9-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter trick-or-treating on Halloween, while his wife was on call, had he not died in the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

Mr. McIntyre and Mr. Dingle, both in their 30's, are among the hundreds of dead and more than 5,000 still missing, most of them men, in the worst terrorist attack in American history. Some were gallant rescue workers, hailed for their courage.

But many more were heroes only to their wives and children. Now the world is hearing their stories, and taking a revealing look at a generation of men who defy cultural stereotypes of absent or work-obsessed fathers largely missing from their children's lives.

"This gives the lie to so much that we talk about," said David Blankenhorn, the founder of the Institute for American Values, a nonpartisan organization doing research on family issues that has focused on the growing number

of fatherless children in America. "We've been thinking of men essentially as a problem in this society for a long time."

Mr. Blankenhorn, the author of *Fatherless America* (Basic Books, 1995), took some blame for the attention paid to men who either abandon their families or play marginal roles, leading to an epidemic of single-parent families. "The thing people like me didn't say clearly enough," he said, "is that the current generation of in-the-home, love-the-mother fathers are the best we've ever had. And their children are lucky, compared to other kids in this generation, but also historically."

At times of disaster like these, relatives recount the best about their loved ones, setting aside their faults and frailties. But the involvement of these men in their children's lives is compelling in its detail, hard to dismiss as gauzy sentiment.

There was John Robinson Lenoir, a senior vice president at Sander O'Neill & Partners,

who wore a pink tutu at his daughter's ice-skating party, playing Dad the Dancing Bear. There was Richard Prouty, a firefighter, who slept for a week on his daughter's college dormitory room floor to help her through final exams when she was ill.

There was Ronald C. Fazio, an accountant at the Aon reinsurance company, who participated in planning every detail of his 30-year-old son's wedding scheduled for this month, including choosing a florist and reception hall. There was Andrew Alameno, a trader at Cantor Fitzgerald, who brushed the hair of his 2-year-old daughter's Barbie doll, played endless rounds of junior Monopoly with his 5-year-old son and skipped dinners with clients to hurry home to Westfield, N.J., by 6 o'clock.

And there was Andrew Kates, a senior managing director at Cantor Fitzgerald, who took his three children ice-skating or to the library every weekend even if it meant passing up a golf game. "It wasn't just me nagging him," said Emily Kates, 38, Andrew's wife, the

mother of Hannah, 5, Lucy, 3, and Henry, 1. "Men are aware now that that's the deal. There's an expectation of equality."

The emergence of the involved father, an equal partner in the raising of children, has made headlines for at least a decade, one of many social changes wrought by the women's movement. But for most of that time, according to Judith Wallerstein, founder of the Center for Families in Transition in Northern California, model fathers were the exception, not the rule; more wishful thinking than reality.

"Hailing fatherhood, until very recently, was just a gleam in someone's eye," said Ms. Wallerstein, author of *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (Hyperion, 2001). "But these men we're hearing about now are not just crazy guys who went to Antioch. This has become mainstream."

Mr. Blankenhorn recalled a time when fathers shook their sons' hands but would not dream of hugging them, when they defined

their own responsibilities as "bringing home the bacon," being faithful, and "being the disciplinarian."

Richard Lynch had a toddler and was looking forward to a houseful of kids, just as his father had. But the elder Mr. Lynch did not do the wash.

"A lot of these young men stepped up to the plate, even though their parents didn't," said Jan Mackell, Mr. Lynch's mother-in-law.

These days, Mr. Blankenhorn said, men who are in the focus groups he conducts as part of his research into what constitutes a good father still say their "prime imperative is to provide for the family."

But, after listing that as their No. 1 priority – "If you don't do that, you're not a man," he paraphrased – they want to discuss, at length, "how they feel about the day-to-day nurturing of their children."

It is this mundane nurturing that permeates the memories of widows and children.

Ron Fazio Jr., who is to be married on Oct. 14, said he comes up blank each time an interviewer asks his father's hobbies. "His true hobby was his family," Mr. Fazio said. That meant camping trips in the Poconos, leading Boy Scout Troop 64 in Closter, N.J., and cooking pasta and red sauce for Sunday dinners. But it also meant activities rarely associated with men, such as planning the details of his son's wedding and spending the entire Labor Day weekend furniture-shopping for the young couple's new home.

Mrs. McIntyre, a stay-at-home mother to Caitlyn, 5, and Don, Jr., 3, said her husband cooked dinner most nights. He also shopped for his children's clothes. "It sounds like I'm making it up," she said. "The other men used to say, 'You're making us look bad.' But he was really in touch with his feminine side. Everyone used to say that."

Mrs. Alameno attributed her husband's eager participation to the fact that his father, a surgeon, and hers, a lawyer turned judge, were

devoured by "building careers" when their children were young.

"Andy liked his work," Mrs. Alameno said. "It was challenging. But he didn't consider himself a worker bee. That's not how he defined himself. If you'd have asked him, he'd have said, 'I'm a father.'"

When Dr. Brathwaite-Dingle, a pediatrician at St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx, set out to plan a memorial service for her husband, she listed the lessons he had taught her and their children, Jassiem, 9, and Nia, 3. High on the list, she said, was the way he had "redefined gender roles" in their family.

When Jassiem was 4, Mr. Dingle got a job in Washington while his wife stayed in New York to begin clinical training. Her hours made it impossible for her to care for the child, the couple decided, so Jassiem lived with his father, who chose a school, hired a nanny and arranged play dates.

After Nia was born and the family was reunited in the Bronx, Mr. Dingle, studying for

an M.B.A., was the full-time parent: cooking, doing laundry, going to parent-teacher conferences. Even after he returned to work, at Encompys, a high-tech company, Mr. Dingle made the pancakes every Saturday morning, baked Christmas cookies and went to see the Pokeman movies his wife despised.

He sounds too good to be true, Dr. Brathwaite-Dingle agreed ruefully.

"He did everything," she said, "except bathrooms."

Epilogue

At the beginning of this little book, we talked about research done by Columbia University's National Center on Addition and Substance Abuse (CASA). The message of Father Flanagan to parents was that they should bring their children up and not simply be friends or bystanders to their children. That is the same message repeated in 2001 by the President of CASA: "The loud and clear message of this survey is this: Moms and dads should be parents to their children, not pals."

The CASA study gives the following examples of how a teen's risk for substance abuse increases when parents fail to:

- **Monitor their teen's television and Internet viewing, and restrict the**

music CDs they purchase. These teens are at twice the risk of those teens whose parents monitor these activities.

- **Know where their teen is after school and on weekends or expect their teen to tell them where they are going at night or on weekends.** Teens whose parents do not keep track of their whereabouts are at twice the risk of teens whose parents do.
- **Impose a curfew.** Teens without a curfew are at one and a half times the risk of teens who have one.
- **Have dinner with their teens most every night.** Teens who do not regularly eat dinner with their families are at one and a half times the risk of teens who have dinner with their parents nearly every night.
- **Closely monitor their teen's academic performance.** Teens whose parents are "very unaware" of how their teen is

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doing at school are at nearly three times the risk of teens whose parents are "very aware" of their teen's schooling.

- **Give their teen a clear message about marijuana use.** Teens whose parents would "not be too upset" about their teen's pot use have teens at more than triple the risk of teens whose parents would be "extremely upset." (Statement of Joseph A. Califano, Jr., February 21, 2001)

Parents who take five or less of the twelve actions listed below are called "hands-off" parents because they regularly fail to set rules and monitor their teen's behavior. What are those twelve actions again?

1. Monitor what their teens watch on television.
2. Monitor what they do on the Internet.
3. Put restrictions on the music CDs they buy.

4. Know where their teens are after school and on weekends.
5. Expect to be told and are told the truth by their teens about where they really are going.
6. Are "very aware" of their teen's academic performance.
7. Impose a curfew.
8. Make clear they would be "extremely upset" if their teen used pot.
9. Eat dinner with their teen most every night.
10. Turn off the TV during dinner.
11. Assign their teen regular chores.
12. Have an adult present when the teen returns from school.

Since September 11, family life seems so much more important. We have all seen pictures of some of the children (more than 1,400 in all) who now have no dad or no mom. These parents said goodbye to their kids in the

morning and never came home that night: firefighters and police officers whose heroism is an inspiration to their orphaned sons and daughters... business men and women of all kinds whose love and guidance will be an everlasting legacy to their families. We all share the tragedy of their lives. And their loss (and our sharing of it) more than anything else is the reason we want to better love and parent our beloved children. In the end, they are all we have...God Bless America.

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PARENTING

Thousands of moms and dads are parenting differently after September 11, 2001. They are feeling better about being parents as they discover new ways to strengthen and build upon their relationship with their children.

We all watched in horror as brave firefighters and police sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. We saw the faces of their children, now without a dad or mom, and we were all moved to cherish our children even more than in the past.

Val J. Peter, Executive Director of Girls and Boys Town, describes the parenting skills that America is coming back to – skills and values that go back all the way to Father Flanagan's time. These skills and values have new twists, new wrinkles. They really work.

This is powerful advice for parents on how to:

- Help their children become caring and sharing.
- Teach their children not to be suckered in by clever advertising.
- Help their children grow closer to their parents.
- Bring up children who love their country.

"The Girls and Boys Town Book on Successful Parenting uses everyday, contemporary situations to provide practical, easily understood advice to help any parent become more effective. I would recommend it even for parents who feel they are already doing a good job parenting their children."

– Dr. Jerry Davis, Psychologist

"Why would a Catholic priest have good advice for parents? Father Peter has personally and successfully been involved in the bringing up and the treatment of over 10,000 difficult children and teenagers. He has great advice for parents."

– Daniel L. Daly, PhD

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